



On-the-Record Briefing

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

En Route to Toyko, Japan
March 17, 2005

SECRETARY RICE: Good morning, afternoon, or whatever it is, everybody. I'm very much now looking forward to visiting Japan, South Korea and China. These are countries with which we have -- in the cases of South Korea and Japan -- I think the best relations that we have had with Japan, the deepest relation, broader relationship in a very, very long time, maybe ever, the best relationship we've certainly had with a democratic South Korea.

And I want to emphasize that South Korea is a country that is going through changes. It now is a democratic South Korea, and obviously, the basis for the alliance and the relationship is therefore different and it's a relationship that is deepening and broadening and modernizing.

And with China, I also think we've had the best -- we have the best relations that we've had in some time, perhaps ever. It means that the United States is positioned to play a particularly constructive role in a region that is changing dramatically, where a rising China is both an opportunity for the region and presents some challenges for the region. It is a region that has its own security challenges, of course, like North Korea, but the most interesting thing about this is that I will be going to this region to talk not just about security in Asia but about the entire global security picture.

When you consider that South Korean and Japanese forces are both deployed to Iraq, that we've had excellent cooperation on Afghanistan, we're talking about alliances that while continuing to stabilize an important region of the world are becoming global. And when I speak tomorrow, I will be emphasizing the degree to which the partnerships that we have in Asia because they are partnerships that are based on democracy, on increasingly open economies, are now able to play this more global role.

And I will be emphasizing the President's broad agenda of democracy and how our Asian alliances relate to that, as well as our European alliances.

So with that introduction, why don't I take a few questions?

Yes.

QUESTION: Sure. In your 2000 *Foreign Affairs* article, you wrote that China is not a status quo power. They resent the role of the U.S. in the Pacific region. They would like to alter, gauge a strategic balance in its own favor. And there are some people that say that this has actually happened as the U.S. has been concentrating on terrorism, on the war on terrorism and has actually begun to really eat the lunch of the United States in Southeast Asia and across the region. Do you still have the concerns you expressed in 2000? And if not, why not?

SECRETARY RICE: The concern comes only from the fact that China is obviously a rising influence in Asia and the question is, what kind of influence is it going to be? And the United States has an important role to play in encouraging the development of that influence in a positive direction rather than in a negative one. There are a lot of reasons to believe that China can be a very positive influence in the region.

We have no problem with a strong, confident, economically powerful China; in fact, we want a strong economically vital and vibrant China because for the world economy and for prosperity in the region and globally, that's a very important factor. Why would the United States want to see a China that was not able to contribute to growth in the international economy?

At the same time, we have been working with the Chinese on regional concerns like the six-party talks on North Korea but also on the war on terrorism which is a global concern. And I might note that the Chinese, of course, are contributing to police functions in Haiti, which is a positive development.

Obviously, we still have unresolved differences with China on human rights, on religious freedom. We believe that as China becomes a more open economy, more open to the world that it is going to be a natural development that China will also have to open its political system. That is something that we've discussed and talked about with the Chinese.

So, of course, whenever you have a new factor in international politics, and China's strength and influence is a new factor of the last half decade or so, there is always a potential for downside but there is a considerable potential for upside, too, and given the American global economic strength, given America's alliances in the region based on security relationship and democratic values, I think we have every reason to believe that we have a chance to guide Chinese influence toward a positive -- the positive side of the ledger rather than the negative side of the ledger. But that doesn't mean that there aren't challenges in doing it, including by the way, the Chinese military buildup which we are concerned about.

QUESTION: So you don't have the same concerns that you expressed in 2000?

SECRETARY RICE: I think the concern being expressed then was you have this new factor in international politics, and there is still this new factor in international politics for a variety of reasons, including the fact that I would argue that the U.S.-Japan relationship has deepened and broadened more rapidly than I think most people would have predicted even in 2000 because our relationship with South Korea is modernizing more rapidly than perhaps you would have predicted at the time, because we have been able to engage the Chinese in the war on terrorism and engage them on regional issues like North Korea, the prospects are there that we could see this development because it is not negative.

But I don't want to underestimate the challenges in doing so, because whenever there is a new factor like this you have to realize that there is a possible downside. But I just want to emphasize, Glenn, the United States would welcome a confident China at peace with its neighbors and transforming its internal system at home.

QUESTION: I just wanted to ask a little bit about what we'd like to see China do, vis-à-vis the North Koreans. We've said we want them to use their leverage to convince Pyongyang to return to the table. But have we asked China to take actions vis-à-vis North Korea to compel them to return, or do we just want them to ask?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I'll have to leave the diplomacy to the Chinese with the North Koreans, but I don't think that there is any doubt that both China and the United States have a strong interest in having the North Koreans return to the talks and return to the talks in a spirit that allows those talks to move forward toward what is their goal, which is the ending of the North Korean nuclear program in a verifiable and irreversible way so that we can have a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula.

It is the only path for the North Koreans to better relations with the rest of the world and I'll leave to the Chinese what leverage they use or what mechanisms they use, but

I do think it's important that the diplomacy that the Chinese do with the North Koreans be effective.

QUESTION: Okay. On human rights, you just said that you have (inaudible) differences with China on this issue. But at the same time, the U.S. decided not to present a resolution against China at the UN Commission on Human Rights, while at the same time, you feel that the situation in this country is not really improving. So what's your assessment of the situation right now on this issue with the Chinese?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the decision not to seek a human rights resolution, we believe that sometimes there is a the possibility for progress and the opportunity to use the prospect of a human rights resolution to get progress and the Chinese have done a number of things, including religious education for minors, including inviting the rapporteur on human rights, including the release of Rebiya Kadeer, which we think constitutes a significant step. They're making certain structural changes also and we think that's important, so we won't seek the resolution this year.

You might remember that two years ago, we did not seek the resolution, then last year we did because we thought there had not been progress. And so, the resolution is something that comes up every year. But of course, the removal arms embargo doesn't come up every year; and once it's removed, it's removed.

The other thing is that we've made a very clear point that this is not just human rights, although that's important, but this is also about the message that it sends about Europe's view of the strategic balance in the Pacific. The United States is a Pacific power; Japan is a Pacific power; South Korea is a Pacific power. And so, all of them, the lifting of the arms embargo has been a source of concern because of China's rising military strength in the region, and after all, particularly for the United States, which plays the role of guarantor of stability in that region, it simply sends the wrong message at a time of rising Chinese military expenditure to lift the arms embargo.

QUESTION: I wanted to ask you about Taiwan and the concept of the Administration's urging for all the world to move toward democracy. What will your message be to Beijing about Taiwan?

SECRETARY RICE: Well the message is, first of all, to both China and Taiwan, which is that the United States maintains a One China policy and we do not expect either China or Taiwan to try to unilaterally change the status quo, and in that regard, move that a unilateral are, in and of itself, not welcomed. They are not going to be able, China or Taiwan, to resolve the Cross-Strait problem unilaterally alone, and what we've been encouraging instead is that they engage each other on ways to reduce Cross-Strait tensions not engage in unilateral actions that actually add to Cross-Strait tensions.

So that's the message to both. Taiwan, obviously has -- is a democracy, has made a great deal of progress on the democratic side and that is an important message because it's yet further evidence that the notion that was in fashion somehow back in the '80s and early '90s that democracy was not a "Asian value" is simply crumbling across the entire region. And in that regard, the further development of an open Chinese political system clearly should not be a matter of traditional or political culture as people sometimes want to make it.

QUESTION: There has been a debate over the years on how hard to push the Chinese on human rights issues, with some saying, you know, a more accommodationist approach, work constructively with the Chinese.

Do you remember when Brent Scowcroft famously went to Beijing just months after Tiananmen Square, after the massacre and toasted the leaders. That was -- you know, I'm wondering what you thought of that decision at the time, and in hindsight, what you think of it and what you think about, you know, the general -- well, what's more effective with the Chinese to be accommodating, to work constructively with them, or to be firmer, take a firmer stand?

SECRETARY RICE: It's perfectly possible to be charmed and principled with the Chinese about human rights and to carry on a constructive dialogue about other issues. The President when he first met with Jiang Zemin out at Crawford, engaged in a long discussion with Jiang Zemin about the importance of religious freedom, about the importance of democracy at a time when the President has said that we're going to put democracy at the center of our dialogue with every country in the world; there is no way in which we're not going to raise these issues with the Chinese. And we've raised them both publicly and privately.

Now, obviously, I think you can do this in a way that respects the fact that China is a large country, a great culture, an important factor in international politics and anything that you do you have to do it in a spirit that is both constructive and respectful. I would hope that we would be able to do that.

When it comes time to sponsor a human rights resolution, we have been willing to do that. When it comes time to see if we can make progress with the Chinese in a concrete way, and then we're successful at it, we've been able to do that. So I think you use all of these tools, public and private, and you also do it in a very constructive and respectful way. I don't think that anyone wants to be in a position of lecturing anybody in the world, it's a matter of making this an important part of our dialogue, and it is.

I'm not going to try to go back, whatever it would be, 15 years or 16 years and judge the actions of the time, you know, in retrospect things always look different.

QUESTION: How critical do you see your trip to these three countries to reviving the North Korean talks?

SECRETARY RICE: It is important to come out and talk with the partners in the six-party talks about how we move forward in light of the North Korean statement back on February 10th. I don't see it as the principle or only important issue out here; in fact, I think it has to be seen in the context of what is evolving in this region as a set of relationships that are going to have to manage a host of security concerns.

Some of them we will manage with the Chinese. Some of the security concerns, of course, arise out of the Chinese military buildup. And so this is a region that is in transition. This is a region that the United States has extremely important relationships and alliances and while the North Korean issue will be on the agenda and it's important and I hope that in talking we can come up with ideas and ways to revive the North Korean talks and to get moving again. I don't see it by any means as the central issue of the trip.

QUESTION: You said you thought it was obviously important that Chinese diplomacy with North Korea will be effective. Inherently from what you see, do you think it has been effective thus far, and do you think they've done everything they can?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I assume that because China says that it wants a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula, and I can see many reasons that China would want a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula, that they are trying to be effective in their diplomacy. The North Koreans are not easy. If this had been easy, it would have been resolved in 1994 when we agreed framework was signed and it wasn't resolved then.

But I do think that we will need to intensify our efforts to -- not just get the North Koreans back to the table, that's important, yes -- but there's a proposal on the table from the United States as to within the six-party framework, we were asked and prodded by our allies several months ago to make a step forward in the six-party talks; we did. There is still no answer to that proposal.

And so it's a matter, yes, of the North Koreans coming back, but it's also a matter of the North Koreans demonstrating whether seriously they wish to move these talks ahead and whether they are driving for the strategic decision or not. So when we frame this, I hope that people understand that, yes, we want the North Koreans to return to the talks, but it needs to be in a spirit of trying to move forward in those talks and there's a proposal on the table for which they could react.

QUESTION: You alluded earlier to the question of improved economic relations. There is concern within the American business community about product dumping. There's ongoing concern on Wall Street about the refusal of the government to (inaudible). What are you going to say to the Chinese about those two decidedly

capitalistic approaches to running their economy?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, it is extremely important that China continue structural reforms that are really required if China is going to integrate into the international economy in an effective way that leaves a level playing field for others in the international economy. One of the reasons that we were such strong proponents in -- and this is the Administration before us, so it's a bipartisan American view. One of the reasons we were very strong proponents of the WTO accession for China is that when you have a large economy that's coming that way, it needs to be within a rule-based structure and the WTO is a rule-based structure.

In that regard, of course, the structural reforms that relate to the issues that you mentioned, but also, I think, one of the most important issues is on intellectual property rights where the piracy continues to be a huge drain for the -- for not just American businesses but for businesses worldwide, and so I expect to have that discussion as well as the discussions about other structural issues.

But we have an effective bilateral structure with the Chinese on joint discussions on the economy in which a lot of these issues are raised, in which they're frequently raised and while I will raise them some, I think they're really being worked very intensively within that structure.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, North Koreans say that one of the reasons why they don't want to go back to the negotiating table is because they have taken offense to you describing them as an outpost of tyranny. I just wondered if there is any chance of you, if it gets them back to the table, to turn down the (inaudible).

SECRETARY RICE: The North Koreans are trying to change the subject, right. They're trying to change the subject. I'm not going to let them change the subject. We're going to keep talking about the fact that this is about the North Korean nuclear program and the fact that their neighbors, as well as the rest of the world, want them to verifiably dismantle their nuclear programs, want them to take advantage of the opportunity afforded them in the six-party talks to make a better life for their people.

Let's just review for a minute what's on the table for the North Koreans. What is on the table for the North Koreans is a -- is that the President of the United States and I have said it and Secretary Powell said it before me, and it's been said over and over -- the United States doesn't have any intention of invading or attacking North Korea. So that's on the table. It is also on the table that because no one intends to do that, the North Koreans can have security assurances within a multilateral framework and everyone is ready to talk with them about what that might look like.

The parties based on that proposal that we've put forward are ready to address -- to do a study and address the North Korean's energy concerns, which are quite significant. Others have been prepared to help the North Koreans with fuel. We, despite our differences with the North Korean regime, have been one of the largest supporters -- suppliers of food aid for the North Korean people because we don't believe in making food aid a political issue in any way.

And I would remind everyone that at the time that we learned that the North Koreans -- and learned reliably -- that the North Koreans were pursuing a second path to a nuclear weapon, outside the agreed framework, that is a uranium enrichment path rather than plutonium path, Jim Kelly, then Assistant Secretary, was on his way to North Korea -- or on his way to talk to the North Koreans about a bold direction for U.S.-North Korean relations that could have been broad in a way that Libya's strategic decision led to a broadening of relations with Libya.

So the North Koreans have already been told an awful lot about what this new path could look like and you have to challenge the North Koreans now to make the strategic choice and let the rest of the world know whether they are prepared to make that strategic choice and move down that path. And that's what this is about. It's not about descriptions of the North Korean regime. I think everybody knows the nature of the North Korean regime.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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 [BACK TO TOP](#)

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